



INFORMATION SHEET

Tenting Site on St. Julien Street City Owned Lot

OVERVIEW

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the City of Duncan has worked with the COVID-19 Cowichan Task Force for Vulnerable Populations, BC Housing, and Island Health to identify temporary sheltering spaces - such as emergency response centres and designated hotels - to provide safe places for people experiencing homelessness to self-isolate and reduce the risk of spreading the virus. In the Cowichan Valley, where not enough indoor shelter spaces are available, organized outdoor tenting sites have been set up.

KEY FACTS

Why is the tenting site being set up on the City owned lot on St. Julien Street?

The City and the COVID-19 Vulnerable Population Cowichan Task Force selected the site that met the provincial criteria. The vacant lot owned by the City of Duncan on St. Julien Street was deemed a suitable location for a temporary small-scale tenting site for up to 12 individuals. Residents will be able to access portable washroom and handwashing facilities, as well as food, health outreach services, all while sheltering in place.

Where is the money coming from to pay for the site and services?

The Rapid Relief Fund, organized by the Victoria Foundation, Jawl Foundation, and Times Colonist is providing \$220,000 for Cowichan. BC Housing costs associated with these initiatives is being funded through the Province's \$5 billion COVID-19 Action Plan. A final total cost for these measures and securing these spaces will not be known until this crisis is over and will depend on duration of use.

How many people will be housed on the site?

We expect approximately 12 people to self-isolate on the site. COVID-19 Vulnerable Populations Task Force members have prior connections with these individuals. Only those known to the COVID-19 Vulnerable Populations Task Force members will be invited to self-isolate at the site.

How long will the tenting site on St. Julien be in place?

The current direction from the Province is in place until June 30th and can be extended with appropriate funding.

Why not use the existing Warmland shelter, or a different location?

The St. Julien Street site was selected based on its close proximity to amenities and the ability to quickly mobilize the required services. There are four other tenting sites that have been or will soon be established: Buller Street, Ladysmith, Cowichan Community Centre and Fuller Lake Arena, North Cowichan, and "the mound", Government Street, Cowichan Tribes.

Although the Warmland House shelter facilities continue to operate, it is not big enough to accommodate all the people who require shelter and provide enough space to practice physical distancing. These tenting sites will also free up space for people who are most at risk – such those with existing health concerns – to access Warmland House and other isolation sites.

Why not use hotels or motels instead of tenting sites?

Work to secure hotel and motel rooms in the region is ongoing and at this time there are people being housed at various locations in the region with ongoing support being provided.

What security will be in place?

Dedicated security has been hired to be on site in Duncan every night. Additionally, a rotating security team will patrol between all Cowichan sites during daytime hours. The Cowichan Housing Association, a local experienced service provider, will be operating the site with support from the Canadian Mental Health Association Cowichan Valley Branch, Island Health, and other public health organizations.

Temporary fencing will also be set-up around the perimeter of the property, and anyone invited to self-isolate will be reminded of the site rules.

What if an outbreak of COVID-19 happens at the site?

In addition to daily support from Canadian Mental Health Association staff, specialized health teams will visit the residents regularly to engage with individuals, assessing their mental and physical health, as well as checking for COVID-19 symptoms.

Anyone with symptoms will be required to follow the same rules that we all must follow – to be quarantined until they are symptom-free.

How do you propose to limit the use of the site to Duncan people only?

This is not an open tent site that just anyone can use. People using the site will be invited to do so by COVID-19 Vulnerable Populations Task Force members, who already have relationships with these local individuals through their services. Only those known to the COVID-19 Vulnerable Populations Task Force members will be invited to self-isolate on the St. Julien Street site.

What about garbage collection and cleanliness at the site?

Regular garbage collection, cleaning and sanitation services will be provided at the site as part of the secured funding. The people using the site will also be expected to keep their areas tidy and to pick up garbage. Residents will have access to centrally located shower facilities and laundry. Portable washrooms will be set up, as well as hand sanitization stations, that residents will be expected to use frequently.

WHO TO CONTACT

We understand these measures come at a difficult time as we all adapt to changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. We greatly appreciate your understanding in these unusual circumstances.

Questions or comments related to the tenting site and its implementation? Contact John Horn, Cowichan Housing Association at 250-597-1938 or john.horn@cowichanhousing.com.

Questions for City staff? Contact the Director of Corporate Services at 250-746-6126 or paige@dunca.ca.
